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National Drug Facts Week in Iowa January 26-February 1

DES MOINES – Iowa Drug Policy Coordinator Steve Lukan is calling on parents and youth caregivers to talk with children over the next week about the real dangers of using drugs. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health, has declared January 26 through December 1 as National Drug Facts Week, to use science-based facts to shatter myths about drugs.

“Teens are regularly exposed to misinformation, but it’s important they know what the science says about drugs,” said Lukan. “As drug laws are debated and drug threats evolve, facts matter. Parents talking with children is an essential form of continuing education to prevent substance abuse involving alcohol, tobacco, medicine, marijuana, synthetic drugs and other illicit drugs.”

One popular myth is that marijuana is harmless. However, science says otherwise. According to NIDA, marijuana is an addictive drug, and its use by teens may negatively affect brain development and impair school performance. Studies such as the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) and the University of Michigan’s Monitoring the Future survey show while perceived risk associated with marijuana use has been declining, teen use of marijuana in the U.S. is up compared to five years ago, and marijuana use by teens and adults is the highest it’s been in more than a decade.

New NSDUH results find that as the rate of marijuana use among Iowans 12 and older decreased from 6.1% in 2011-2012 to 5.98% in 2012-2013, use in the U.S. increased from 7.13% to 7.4%. At the same time, marijuana use in Colorado and Washington State, two states leading the marijuana legalization movement, rose from 10.41% to 12.7% and from 10.21% to 12.28% respectively.

“We must clear the air on mixed messages, because Iowa teens are being exposed to newer and more potent forms of marijuana from states where it’s legal,” said Lukan. “Law enforcement is finding more marijuana buds, hash oils, marijuana waxes and infused foods, reportedly with much higher concentrations of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana.”

“Iowa communities are relatively safe places, but work is required to make them better for our children,” said Lukan. “Because drugs change, the important message for Iowa youth is don’t put anything in your body if you are unsure of it, or if it’s not from a trusted adult.”

For more information on National Drug Facts Week go to www.Iowa.Gov/ODCP.

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